

U.S. Department  
of Transportation

United States  
Coast Guard



# COAST GUARD NEWS

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **DEATH ON THE WATER CAN BE AVOIDED; COAST GUARD LEADS “OPERATION BOAT SMART”**

This summer over 72 million Americans will participate in recreational boating activities, taking to the water in 16 million registered and unregistered boats and watercraft. Historically, between 700 to 800 recreational boaters, including about 40 children, die in boating accidents each year – mostly as a result of drowning. The majority of those tragic deaths can be avoided if boaters follow basic safety rules. Operation BoatSmart is a combined effort by a coalition of boating safety agencies, maritime associations, manufacturers, and others whose goal is to reduce the number of recreational boating fatalities on America’s waterways, with particular emphasis on those inland waters that account for nearly 85 % of boating deaths each year. The coalition includes the U.S. Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary, the National Safe Boating Council, U.S. Power Squadrons, National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) and the National Water Safety Congress.

Operation BoatSmart is a 4-year operation that will be kicked off May 24 in Washington, D.C., when Coalition Partners will sign the operational planning document. The signing will kickoff the North American Safe Boating campaign by the Coast Guard Commandant, Admiral James M. Loy, and the Secretary of Transportation, Norman Y. Mineta.

Although officials hope their message will get to everyone, extra efforts will be made reach “high risk” boaters. Among them are those who have not completed a safety course, who are incapable of putting on a life jacket by themselves (children), who are engaged in high risk activities aboard high risk vessels during high risk times, and those who drink alcohol while boating. A few simple safety rules are:

- *always* wear a life jacket when in an open, unenclosed portion of a boat,
- *know and obey* the rules of the road,
- *keep* your boat in good repair, and
- *never* boat under the influence, as an operator or passenger.

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*On an average day, the Eighth Coast Guard District saves 14 lives, \$7 million in property, and interdicts over 400 pounds of illegal drugs. The U.S. Coast Guard has served America’s national security interests since 1790.*